

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 07887 232342Z
ACTION SY-05

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6410
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMCONSUL/GUAYAQUIL 1216
AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 7887

DEPT FOR A/SY/FO; PANAMA FOR RSS

LIMA FOR RSO, GUAYAQUIL FOR PSO, FROM RSO.

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC
SUBJECT: MARINE SECURITY GUARDS FOR AMCONGEN GUAYAQUIL.

REF: STATE 269579

1. A MEETING OF THE GUAYAQUIL SECURITY WATCH COMMITTEE WAS HELD IN THE CONGEN ON NOVEMBER 15, 1977. THE RSO CONCURS WITH MOST CONGEN AND EMBASSY PERSONNEL IN ECUADOR THAT DECISION TO ASSIGN MSGS TO GUAYAQUIL IS NOT CLEAR-CUT AND THAT THERE ARE VALID ARGUMENTS TO BE MADE IN EITHER SIDE OF QUESTION. HOWEVER, FOR THE REASONS STATED BELOW, RSO STILL RECOMMENDS ASSIGNMENT OF MSGS TO POST.

2. THE RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN THE FORM OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY (BOMBINGS, KIDNAP PLOTS, ASSASSINATION THREATS) AND CIVIL UNREST (STUDENT AND LABOR DISTURBANCES, ROCK THROWING, STRIKES, DISRUPTION OF TRAFFIC AND OCCASIONAL SHOOTING), HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED OVER THE PAST YEAR. HOWEVER, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THIS
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UNUSUAL TRANQUILITY WILL CONTINUE. THIS HAS BEEN EVIDENCED BY THE RECENT ATTACKS AGAINST THE CONGEN BUILDING BY 300 STUDENTS THROWING ROCKS AND MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AND THE SHOOTING AT THE AZTRA SUGAR MILL, WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEATHS OF AT LEAST 25 WORKERS. (UNOFFICIAL ESTIMATES RUN AS HIGH AS 100 KILLED).

3. THE CONGEN POLITICAL OFFICER OBSERVES "THE GUAYAQUILENO TENDS MORE TO OUTBURSTS OF VIOLENCE AND MAYHEM THAN DOES HIS COUNTERPART IN QUITO. WITH THE PLANNED RETURN TO A CONSTITUTIONALLY ELECTED CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IT IS EXPECTED THAT CONTROLS CURRENTLY GOVERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIONS, BOTH LABOR AND STUDENT, WILL BE SLACKENED." HE FURTHER COMMENTS THAT "STUDENT VIOLENCE CAN BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE AFTER THE COUNTRY RETURNS TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT AND CONSULATE CAN EXPECT TO BE THE TARGET OF MORE INCIDENTS THAN IN THE PAST."

4. THE CONGEN ACTING PRINCIPAL OFFICER, MR. HOLM, WHILE NOT FAVORING ASSIGNMENT OF MSGS AT THIS TIME, STATED THAT IF ELECTIONS WERE NOT HELD, "THE STUDENTS COULD BE EXPECTED TO REACT TO THE CANCELLATION AND THE CONSULATE GENERAL, WHILE NOT A PRINCIPAL TARGET, COULD BE ONE OF THOSE EXPECTED TO BE ATTACKED BY LARGE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS."

5. THE RSO AND OTHER CONGEN OFFICERS FEEL THAT THE CONSULATE IS A PRIMARY TARGET AND WILL LIKELY BE ATTACKED DURING ANY PERIOD OF CIVIL UNREST. TRADITIONALLY, THESE ATTACKS HAD BEEN LIMITED TO THROWING ROCKS, BRICKS AND OTHER MISSILES AT THE MISSION. HOWEVER, THE RSO VIEWS THE INTRODUCTION OF MOLOTOV COCKTAILS, USED BY STUDENTS THREE BLOCKS FROM THE CONSULATE IN SEPTEMBER 1976 AND AGAINST THE CONGEN IN OCTOBER 77, AS POSING A CONFIDENTIAL

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GREATER AND POTENTIALLY MORE DANGEROUS THREAT.

6. IT IS FELT THAT THE INTERNAL TERRORIST THREAT IN ECUADOR IS MINIMAL AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, THE THREAT FROM INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED.

7. INTERNAL SECURITY AT THE CONGEN IS POOR. ON A RECENT INSPECTION BY THE PSO, FIVE SECURITY VIOLATIONS WERE FOUND IN ONE SECTION. ALTHOUGH MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO IMPROVE THIS SITUATION, RSO FEELS THAT ASSIGNMENT OF MSGS WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE PROTECTION AFFORDED TO SENSITIVE OPERATIONS AND CLASSIFIED MATERIAL.

8. OF ADDITIONAL CONCERN ARE THE EMPLOYEES AND DEPENDENTS WHO PERMANENTLY RESIDE IN THE CONGEN BUILDING. ALTHOUGH CONTRACT GUARDS ARE ON DUTY AT THE CONGEN FULL TIME, THE RSO BELIEVES THAT MSGS ARE FAR BETTER EQUIPPED AND TRAINED TO HANDLE ANY EMERGENCY SITUATION THREATENING THE SAFETY OF ASSIGNED PERSONNEL AND DEPENDENTS. MSGS CAN ALSO BE AN EFFECTIVE DETERRANT AGAINST SURREPTITIOUS OR FORCED ENTRY BY INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS CONSIDERING AN ATTEMPT TO BREACH THE MISSION'S PERIMETER BARRIERS.

9. POST PERSONNEL AND RSO CONCUR THAT THE PRESENCE OF UNIFORMED MILITARY PERSONNEL AT THE CONGEN WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO CAUSE ANY SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS. MARINES ARE ASSIGNED AT MISSIONS WORLDWIDE, INCLUDING QUITO, AND UNIFORMED CONTRACT GUARDS ARE ALREADY SERVING IN THE CONSULATE.

10. HOLM'S VIEWS WERE REPRESENTATIVE OF THOSE OPPOSED TO ASSIGNMENT OF MSGS NOW. HE STATED "THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WOULD BE A SECURITY ADVANTAGE IN HAVING MARINES HERE, THE NEED IS NOT SUFFICIENT AT THIS TIME TO WARRANT THE CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE INVOLVED." MR. HOLM ALSO FELT THAT THE MSG QUESTION SHOULD BE REVIEWED EVERY SIX MONTHS.
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11. THE RSO AND CONGEN POLITICAL OFFICER FEEL THAT IF MSGS ARE APPROVED FOR THE POST, THAT THEY SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO GUAYAQUIL ASAP. THE PRESENCE OF MSGS AT THE MISSION NOW WOULD BE VIEWED AS A GENERAL UPGRADING OF SECURITY RATHER THAN IS SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS FROM NOW, WHEN IT COULD BE SEEN AS A DIRECT RESPONSE TO CIVIL UNREST OR ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE CONSULATE GENERAL.

12. A SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR BLOOMFIELD, DCM, PSO AND RSO WAS HELD IN THE EMBASSY ON NOV. 17. THE AMBASSADOR STATED THERE COULD BE AN UPSURGE OF VIOLENCE BUT DID NOT SEE IT AS THE KIND OF VIOLENCE THAT WOULD BE DIRECTED AGAINST THE U.S. WITH THE INTENTION OF PENETRATING THE CONGEN BUILDING. HE NOTED THAT IN RECENT YEARS THE CONSULATE GENERAL HAS NOT NORMALLY BEEN A PRIMARY TARGET OF ATTACK BUT ONLY A PASSING ONE AS DEMONSTRATORS MOVED THROUGH THE STREET ON WHICH THE BUILDING IS LOCATED. THE AMBASSADOR CONCURS WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF THE INSPECTORS THAT HE DOES NOT FEEL MSGS WOULD BE OF ANY GREATER UTILITY THAN CONTRACT GUARDS DURING CIVIL UNREST WHEN ROCKS AND OTHER MISSILES COULD BE THROWN AT THE CONGEN BUILDING. NEITHER THE AMBASSADOR, DCM, NOR PSO PERCEIVE OF A POTENTIAL THREAT DURING THE NEXT YEAR WHICH COULD JUSTIFY THE ASSIGNMENT OF MSGS TO GUAYAQUIL. IT WAS THE CONSENSUS OF OPINION THAT IF MSGS ARE NOT ASSIGNED NOW, THAT THE THREAT SITUATION SHOULD BE REVIEWED PERIODICALLY. THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSULT WITH THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER, ROBERT BISHTON, PRESENTLY ON HOME LEAVE IN THE WASHINGTON AREA AND NOT DUE TO RETURN TO POST UNTIL JANUARY.
BLOOMFIELD

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